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ABSTRACT

Questionnaires were administered to all community college faculty and administrators in each of the 19 Kansas community colleges in order to assess staff development needs in the areas of instructional activities, understanding the role of community colleges, and administration, and to ascertain the desired conditions for staff development programs. Of the respondents, 533 (87%) were faculty members and 88 (11%) were administrators. Relative to instruction, the following areas were identified as possible foci for staff development activities: managing individualized instruction, developing audio-tutorial learning materials, evaluating the effectiveness of various instructional strategies, obtaining research on teaching/learning, developing programs for disadvantaged learners, and creating an environment where students assume responsibility for their own learning. In relation to the community college role, staff knowledge was generally considered acceptable, but need was noted in understanding the purposes of remedial and developmental programs and in knowledge of student characteristics and needs. Regarding administrative staff development, need was expressed for development of the ability to delegate authority, management and human relations skills, evaluation skills, and effective use of committees. Relative to conditions for staff development, campus sites and weekdays during the regular school year were preferred by respondents. (MB)

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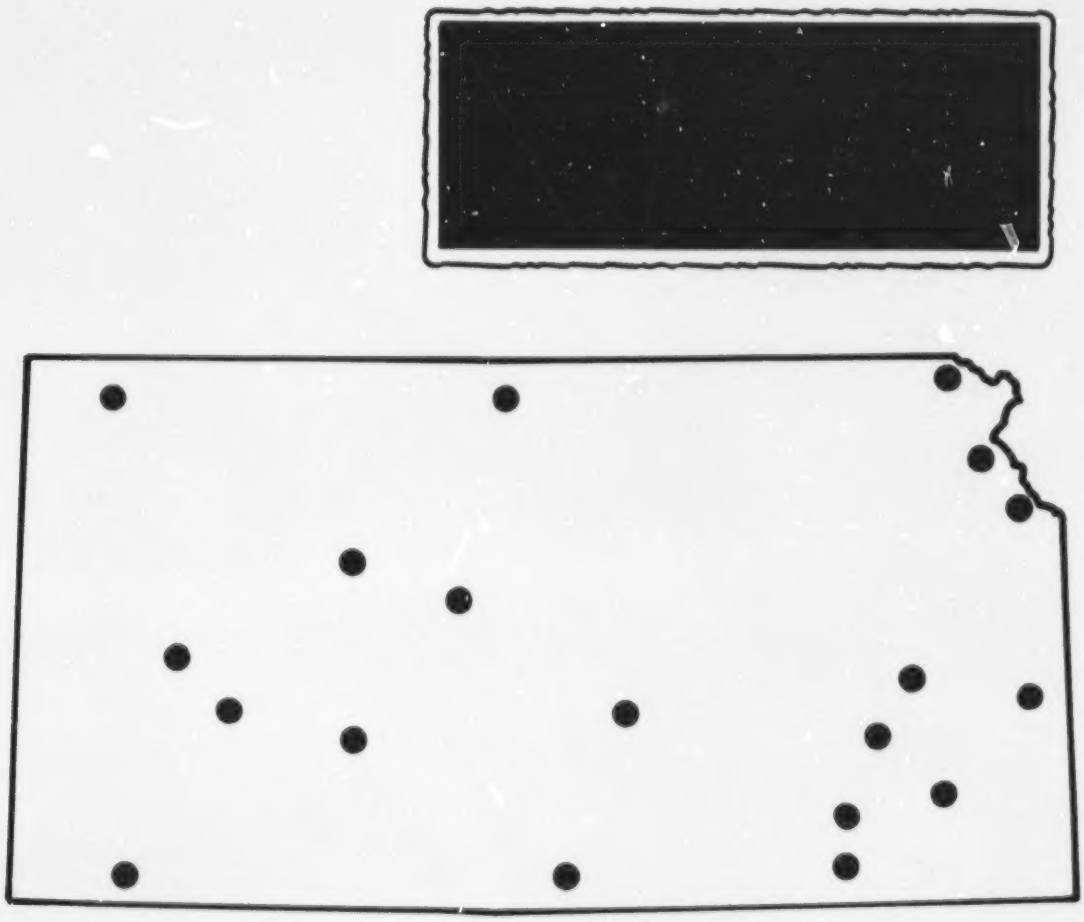

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DEPARTMENT OF CURRICULUM

AND ADMINISTRATION

KANSAS COMMUNITY COLLEGES:

ASSESSING STAFF

DEVELOPMENT NEEDS

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KANSAS COMMUNITY COLLEGES: ASSESSING

STAFF DEVELOPMENT NEEDS

There is a growing realization among community college personnel that professional improvement programs will and must become a dynamic force for the over-all improvement of our community college system. If we look upon productive personnel, especially our instructional staff in the community colleges, as the promise for the future growth and development of outstanding educational programs; if we really believe that only the most productive personnel are free to contribute significantly to educational improvements and, in turn, assist other personnel in their drive for productivity; then, our programs of staff development in our public community college system will have to be expended in a form and substance which will assure the realization of these concepts.

Personnel development takes on added significance when the comprehensive nature of the community college is understood. Many early junior colleges were basically private finishing schools, some type of vocational school, or simply a place for students to go who could not get into a four year college. While there may still be some two-year colleges providing no greater service than this to their communities, the vast majority of public two-year colleges are attempting to provide a curriculum which is responsive to community needs. Being responsive

to community needs means these colleges must provide programs that will include vocational or technical courses for students seeking early employment, provide opportunities for adults who need job retraining, general education programs for all students, programs to develop specialized skills and talents, experiences to assist in removing education deficiencies, strong programs of couseling and guidance, academic and preprofessional college-level freshmen and sophomore courses, and programs designed for specific community services outside of the regular day and evening schedule.[1]

In addition, personnel development takes on added significance when it is understood that the most identificable common denominator among the diverse community junior colleges is the continued emphasis upon teaching. Community college, unlike other institutions of higher education where research and consulting is highly regarded, expect their staff to devote themselves to the major task of teaching. This emphasis upon teaching in the community college, the nature of the institution, its commitment to the society it serves, and its continued growth and development are reasons why those interested in the community colleges have during the past ten years been demonstrating a renewed interest in the development of the personnel serving in these institutions of higher education. Therefore, this study was undertaken to assess the current staff development needs of Kansas community college personnel. Specifically the writer undertook to answer the question: What are the staff development needs of community junior college personnel as seen by faculty and administrators employed in the Kansas public community college system?

There has been much in the way of empirically gathered information accumulated concerning community and junior college staff development needs. The American Association of Community and Junior Colleges conducted two national surveys, one in 1969[2] and a replication of the survey in 1973.[3] The contributions of Hammons and Wallace in 1976 developed a very comprehensive picture of the staff development needs of faculty and administrators in the Northeastern United States.[4] Consequently, the "literature" tells much about the background and need for staff development programs.

While there has been much research on national and regional levels concerning the staff development needs of community junior college personnel there remains a void in available research dealing extensively with the Kansas system. Hopefully, this study will be helpful in filling that void. These data, gathered from over 500 community college personnel, faculty and administrators employed in Kansas, should provide insights into the preceived staff development needs of these men and women who are providing the instructional leadership for one very significant facet of higher education in Kansas.

THE PROCEDURES

The survey Instrument: The instrument developed for this study was a fourteen page questionnaire, requiring slightly over 85 responses from each participant. The instrument was a modification of the one used by James D. Hammons and Terry H. Wallace in their assessment of community college staff development needs in the Northeastern Region of the United States. Permission was obtained to utilize the format of their instrument for the purpose of this study.

The survey instrument consisted of four parts. Part I was designed to identify the need for staff development related to instructional activities. Potential staff development needs in over 20 significant instructional areas were investigated - ranging from developing test items to evaluating the effectiveness of various instructional strategies. Part II was designed to identify the need for staff development in selected areas related to the unique role of the community college. Data was collected here ranging from a knowledge of the characteristics and needs of students attending community colleges to understanding the purpose for and implications of the open - door philosophy. Part III of the survey instrument was devoted to determining the staff development needs of administration. Administrative staff development needs in 25 important administrative activites were investigated - activities such as working effectively with the board of trustees, and from dealing with conflict to collecting and using data regarding educational services needed by the community. Part IV was designed to ascertain the desired conditions for staff development programs. The instrument asked participants to indicate such concerns as where they would prefer staff develop-

ment programs be held, the best time for off-campus staff development activities, etc.

The Sample: During the 1977 academic year discussions were held with various administrators in each of the nineteen public community colleges briefly explaining the nature and purpose of the study, and asking them for assistance in conducting the survey. Therefore, the population for the study consisted of those individuals identified as active in some teaching or administrative capacity in the Kansas public community college districts.

To collect the data, a survey package was mailed to each community college. These survey packages contained the following material: a letter explaining the nature and purpose of the study, the survey instrument, and a prepaid return envelope. Each college was assigned a number in order that the researchers might know the number of respondents from each college. However, no provision was made for identifying individual respondents. In addition, after data were tabulated each college district lost its identity. There was no attempt to categorize the colleges in relation to such factors as enrollment, urban, rural, etc.

The questionnaire was sent to all community college personnel rather than a selected sample of faculty or other administrators because of the desire to ascertain the perceptions of staff development needs held by all active community college personnel. Of the respondents, 533 (87 percent) identified themselves as an active faculty member: 88 (11 percent) indicated an active administrative position ranging from the chief executive of the campus to dean of instruction, from dean of student services

to director of Learning Resources Center. Slightly less than 2 percent failed to identify their position in the community college.

Analysis of Data: The primary statistics reported were the total number and percentage of participants in each category of response. This was tabulated and reported according to those responses made by (a) faculty members, and (b) those holding some administrative position. In all cases the percentages were based upon the number of responses for each inquiry. While there were over 600 participants, not every item on each inquiry was answered, thus the total number of responses varied from item to item.

RESULTS OF THE STUDY

The general picture that emerges from this study is that personnel working in community colleges in Kansas perceive themselves as having a number of definite development needs related to (a) instructional activities, (b) understanding the unique role of the community college in higher education, and (c) administrative functions and activities. Also, the participants replying to this survey expressed a number of

opinions concerning selected considerations on where, when, and how ataff development activities should be conducted.

The major findings relative to areas of possible staff development needs in community college instructional activities were:

1) Staff abilities in traditional aspects of instruction - e.g., from writing course objectives to preparing for and making groups presentations, from developing test items to developing course outlines - are perceived as being more than reasonably acceptable.

2) Slightly more than half of the participants in this study indicated staff deficiencies ranging from some to critical in solving problems related to managing individualized instruction - e.g., student attendance, motivation, etc.

3) Well over half the replies identified deficiencies ranging from some to critical in the areas of - developing audio-tutorial learning materials, evaluating the effectiveness of various instructional strategies, obtaining research findings on teaching/learning, developing programs for disadvantaged learners, and creating an environment in which students assume responsibility for their own learning.

4) The abilities to develop programs for disadvantaged learners, solving problems related to individualized instruction, and creating an environment of responsibility were perceived as areas of high critical need with between fourteen and eighteen percent of the respondents so identifying these areas.

5) Differences between faculty and administrators perceptions concerning staff development needs appears to be significant in a number of areas. Fifty percent or more of the administration identified need for some staff development activites in seventeen of the 26 important areas of instructional activities.

6) Difference between faculty and administrators concerning the writing of behavioral objectives was very strong. Whereas 76 percent of the faculty indicated staff abilities were acceptable, 56 percent of the administrators noted staff deficiencies ranging from some to critical in this area.

7) Administrators as opposed to faculty were found to believe there was greater need for professional improvement activities in selection/development and utilization of multi-media instructional materials. Over 70 percent of the administrators indicated staff deficiencies ranging from some to critical as opposed to 53 percent of the faculty who noted that staff abilities are acceptable.

8) No major differences appear to exist between faculty and administration concerning staff training needs in areas of non-traditional instruction. Both groups were in basic agreement that skills in the following areas are lacking - developing audio-tutorial learning materials, evaluating the effectiveness of various instructional strategies, obtaining research findings on teaching/learning, develop-

ing programs for disadvantaged learners, solving problems related to managing individualized instruction, reinforcing student learning, and creating an environment of responsibility.

The significant findings concerning staff abilities related to as understanding of the unique role of the community college in higher education were as follows:

1) Staff knowledge of the purposes community colleges serve was considered acceptable by a large majority of those responding to this survey - e.g., 73 percent concerning transfer education, 84 percent general education, 68 percent vocational-technical education, 71 percent in community services / adult and continuing education.
2) Respondents indicated that staff knowledge of the community colleges' purpose in - remedial and developmental programs, and guidance and counseling - appears to be the most serious need.
3) Thirty-seven percent of the participants indicated staff deficiencies ranging from some to critical regarding knowledge of the characteristics and needs of students attending community colleges.
4) Administrators identified greater need than faculty in personnel understanding of - characteristics and needs of students, community services, adult and continuing education, and vocational/technical education.

5) While a majority of both groups expressed general overall satisfaction with staff knowledge concerning the unique role of the community college, adminstrators much more frequently than faculty, indicated a need for some staff development activities in all areas surveyed.

The important findings regarding administrative staff development needs were:

1) Administrative ability to delegate authority and responsibility was noted as of the highest priority among those responding to the study - 63 percent indicating deficiencies ranging from some (43 percent) to critical (20 percent).

2) A second major area of needed administrative improvement (identified by 50 percent or more of the participants) involved the areas of management and human relation skills - conducting institutional research, collecting and using data, planning and conducting orientation programs, and planning/conducting in-service programs.

3) Administrative skills in-supervising/evaluating personnel, utilizing curriculum advisory committees effectively, and dealing with conflict were identified as deficient by slightly more than 48 percent of the participants.

4) A sizeable need for administrative in-service training seems to exist in several areas - areas were at least 40 percent or more of those replying to this survey indicated administrative deficiencies ranging from some to critical (e.g.

participative management, setting of goals, working effectively with trustees, human relations skills, communication skills, conducting cost studies, budgeting, recruiting and selecting faculty, planning, using time effectively, and working with collective bargaining.)

5) Administrators and faculty differ significantly on twelve of the twenty-five items included in this section of the survey instrument. Administrators, much more frequently than faculty indicating some need for in-service training.

6) Administrators were found to be indicating a greater need for professional improvement activities than faculty in the areas of - implementing MBO, setting of goals, effective collection and utilization of data regarding educational services needed by the community, implementing, and facilitating innovation, dealing with conflict, using PPBES, and implementing system approach to instruction.

7) Sharp differences appear to exist between faculty and administration concerning need for professional improvement in the area of delegating authority and responsibility - e.g., Forty-five percent of the administrators, as opposed to only 28 percent of the faculty, indicated staff abilities were acceptable.

In addition to securing information concerning staff development

needs, this assessment attempted to determine participant preferences about where, when, and how professional improvement activities should be presented. Findings relative to consideration regarding staff development training were:

1) When considering where to hold staff development in-service programs participants preferred (by an eight to one ratio) on campus site. If off-campus site had to be used, respondents tended to prefer a site with 100 miles of the campus.
2) The best time for off-campus faculty and administrative staff training program - week days during the regular school year. The least popular option was weekends during the school year.
3) The second best time for off-campus programs, whether for faculty or administration - breaks during the school year (40 percent), and summer (35 percent).
4) Respondents selected the months of January, August, and October as particularly convenient for workshop activities. The summer months of June and July were less popular.
5) The most preferable time configuration for off-campus activities according to faculty were, in order of preference: short-term workshops (one to three days), graduate classes on campus, consultants visits to campus, and materials.
6) Administrators selected time configurations for off-campus professional training activities as follows, in order of preference: short-term workshops, consultants visits to campus, graduate classes on campus, and materials.

The above, then, are the significant findings of this study. Basically, the treatment of the data was discriptive; for example, a certain number of personnel deficiencies were identified in non-traditional approaches to instruction. Through this approach, it was possible to identify a sizeable, and significant demand in the Kansas community colleges for professional imporvement in areas of instructional activities, understanding the unique role of the community college in higher education, and administrative skills.

The findings of this study, the first major, in-depth investigation of staff development needs in Kansas community colleges, vividly demonstrate that personnel in Kansas community colleges understand the need for professional imporvement activities. Among the faculty and administrative leadership of the Kansas community college system there seem to be strong feeling that personnel working in these outstanding institutions have an obligation to be actively involved in maintaining and improving their instructional/leadership competencies.

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